Copy of letter —

Samuel May jr. to Wm. H. Channing

Dated, Octo. 17. 1858.

MS. B. 16, v. 2, 1/2

Copy —
S.M.Jr. to W.H. Channing.

Leicester, Sunday, Oct 17. 1858.

Dear William;

Our conversation was so hurried, and of necessity so abruptly terminated, the other morning, that I resolved to take the first quiet hour I could command, to let you see all my thought and my inmost heart in regard to the subjects which were then opened. There shall not be a division in spirit, if I can help it, between you and me.

There is, I honestly think, (as I have long seen it,) a wrong done to us, & the Am. A.S. Soc'y. by the attitude you have taken in some matters. I have long wished to have a frank conversation with you on the subject. I could not bear to open a correspondence, in a critical vein, with an old friend, & one so staunch & true as you had been to me for many a year; and though, many a time, I was on the very verge of saying "I will write to W.G, and tell him just how I feel, & what I think," yet I never quite came to that resolve, & the whole matter lay undone. With your characteristic frankness, you opened the very matter the other day, upon which (as I told you at our bro. Richardson's house a fortnight since) I desired half an hour's talk with you. Let me have it now, in this poor substituted way, such as paper & ink affords.

And, first, with regard to the little paragraph in the Standard, which you spoke of as evidence of a wrong bias toward you. I can only say, after reviewing the whole subject as well as I can, I see no ground for your criticism upon it. I do not, of course, know Oliver Johnson's heart with a

perfect knowledge, & therefore cannot say that no sinister motive actuated him; but I must say I did not, & do not now, see any evidence of it. It was my hope, and my expectation, (the grounds of wh. I need not open out this letter by giving,) - and I do not doubt it was also O.J.'s hope and expectation, and that of many another person who intimately knows your "manner of life" for years past, that you would, on this visit to America, take many occasions to give a full expression of your best and maturest thoughts on the whole subject of Slavery, such as you had arrived at by means of the advantages obtained from several years' view of it from another country, and amidst new circumstances. The New York meeting was one of the occasions which (it appeared) seemed to O.J., (as it does to me) to call for your instructing, critical, & encouraging word, - in short, which demanded "your testimony" - for I know no guiltier body of men in the country, as to Slavery, than the ministers of the country.

With your antecedents, your absence for a time, during which Slavery has been enacting & enforcing its cruel & tyrannical purposes in ways which appeared incredible to this nation a few years before, it was the least we could do, to expect that a very clear, distinct, monitory lesson should be given by you, on the most public occasions you could command. If O.J. thought you did not do so at N.Y., it does seem to me to have been his duty to say it; & it appeared to me at the time that he had performed the duty in a manner respectful to you, doing justice to your past history, and to the spirit pervading the discourse of which he was speaking. If he had in any way

misconceived or misrepresented your discourse, you know he would have been more than pleased to correct his error.

I do not think it quite in point to say that, neither did you speak of Socialism, nor of Woman's Rights, on both which questions you had formerly taken a leading and prominent position; first, because it may be that you should have spoken of them, in such a way at least as would indicate to all your hearers your views of the great social wrongs which our Nation is upholding, ecclesiastically as well as otherwise; and second, because those subjects are not, as the enslavement of 4 millions of our brethren is, the foundation of a compromise between the several parties to our National Union, by means of which all sides are pledged to recognise and help sustain this great and unparalleled wickedness. — (I did not think this point would have thus spread itself out.) —

The principal criticism which I have heard concerning you, from my A.S. associates here, since you have been abroad, has been, That we no longer seem to have you with us in the cause; that your shoulder does not seem to be, as once, at the wheel where we are driving; and that, on account of some actual or supposed change in your views as to our National Union with the Slaveholding States, we do not have your sympathy & cooperation. I enclose* with this the printed note which

* (extract from the note) "May I not "unblamed" beg of you not to qualify or let down your Uncle's testimony as to the blood-guiltiness in regard to Harvey, and the criminal responsibility for it, of this Union?

I wrote to you on Wednesday last, (the day before we met at the Photographic Rooms) that you may see just what the prominent point was, upon which I chiefly desired some talk with you, and where we have felt your Anti-Slavery labours to be ~~compromised~~ compromised and impaired. You appeared on Thursday last, that your heart was unchanged towards us & our cause, was most grateful to me; while your intimation that the abolitionists here are inclined to show you any unkindness, or do you the smallest injustice, I am sure, you should repudiate & discard, as utterly without foundation. P.S. But, in our few words on Thursday last, I referred to another matter and one which has personally surprised and hurt me.

Let me explain. For several years past Frederick Douglass (for what purpose, I will not stop to say) has been doing his utmost endeavour, directly in his paper, & indirectly by agents and representatives in this country & in England, to establish the point that the Amⁿ A. S. Soc^y is infidel in its principles and aims, disowning the Christian religion, & labouring to subvert the Christian Church. He, & his agents, have gone, with this tale upon their lips, into all accessible private circles, have got the ear of orthodox & heterodox ministers & D^rs of Divinity, and, in a spirit of indescribable malignity and slander, have caused ~~many~~ great numbers to believe that we are the insidious enemies of Christ & his Church. Their own professions of piety & loyalty to the Church have given them an easy entrance to the confidence of these rabbis & priests & sectarian bodies; and they have as tentatively, and with the coarseness of want of refinement & self-respect, painted themselves in contrast with us, — their own piety & love for the Church, in contrast with our infidelity & hostility to it! Now God knows, my friend, I do not charge you with ~~any~~ any part in so foul a work; no does any body, I mean

believe you capable of it. Still, the fact remains, that you have given much countenance and aid to this man, & his agents, and movements in England, &c, without any rebuke of their murderous conduct towards us, of which the public (so far as I know) have been cognizant.

Now, William, we are not infidels, as you very well know. It is not true in any sense, technical, apostolical, or actual. You could do us cause great service in England by putting your foot, openly and every where, on the monstrous lie that we are so.

Who, my dear friend, has done the other an injustice? We, to you? or you, to us? — It is no justification of Douglass that he has real or fancied wrongs, at the hand of any of the abolitionists. Revenge, leading to falsehood, can be justified by no circumstances; and only a vile man can be tempted to resort to it. I know of no wrong done to him; but I know he declares that he has been wronged. Be that as it may, I am not, dear William, content to see you take by the hand so base & cruel a calumniator, & give him the benefit of your public alliance and "endorsement," as if he were an honorable man.

Now, my friend, I have spoken to you, in my plain way, with all sincerity and confidence, and have given you to see my whole heart in this matter. I am sure you see no bitterness there towards yourself. I know you too well; I know & love you too well, for that. It is no affectation nor any shamming of the point to say that I honour your devoted spirit, your earnest labours, your zeal

in the good work to which you give yourself conscientiously and faithfully. But I see you in a false position towards our cause and towards us. I see (as I think) that you are giving such support and countenance to the accusers of our personal & associate character, as is extensively used by them to imply countenance to the accusation. And I now claim, & shall consider, expect, that you will do justice to yourself in this matter; feeling every assurance that, in perfectly doing that, you will do and cannot be unjust to us, or to any man.

I am, dear William, & wish to be,
Truly & faithfully, Your friend,
(Signed) Samuel May jr.

Rev. Wm H. Channing.

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